

Message Text

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ACTION DPW-01

INFO OCT-01 EA-06 ISO-00 SCS-03 PM-03 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15

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FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3462

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

SECDEF

CINCPAC

CDR JCRC CP SAMAE-SAN THAI

C O N F I D E N T I A L VIENTIANE 2752

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MOPS, CASC, LA

SUBJECT: DEAN/SHARMAN CASE

REFS: A) VIENTIANE 2388

B) VIENTIANE 2375

1. DURING CONVERSATION AT LAO NEW YEAR CELEBRATIONS IN LUANG PRABANG, GENERAL KHAMHOU BOUSSARATH CONFIRMED TO CHARGE THAT PRIME MINISTER HAD DESIGNATED HIM TO CONDUCT A FULL INVESTIGATION OF DEAN/SHARMAN CASE (REF A). KHAMHOU INDICATED A PREDISPOSITION TO BELIEVE THAT DEAN AND SHARMAN HAD BEEN IN NORTH VIETNAMESE HANDS FROM OUTSET BUT OTHERWISE DISPLAYED IGNORANCE OF DETAILS OF CASE.

2. EMBOFF AND NEWLY ARRIVED SPECIAL ASSISTANT TO AMBASSADOR FOR MIA MATTERS THEREFORE CALLED ON KHAMHOU APRIL 18 TO URGE HIM TO BEGIN INVESTIGATION BY CONTACTING FAR G-2, CHANNEL THROUGH WHICH WE RECEIVED CONSIDERABLE INFORMATION ON LAO DEFECTORS AND ESCAPEES WHO HAD OBSERVED OR BEEN
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CONFINED WITH DEAN AND SHARMAN. (WE HAVE ALREADY

SUPPLIED FAR G-2 WITH OUT SUMMARIES OF EVIDENCE AND COPIES OF OUR CHRONOLOGY OF CASE.) KHAMHOU IMMEDIATELY UNDERTOOK TO ARRANGE MEETING WITH G-2. (FURTHER DETAILS BY MEMCON.)

3. KHAMHOU INITIALLY EMPHASIZED HIS INTENTION OF DEALING DIRECTLY WITH NORTH VIETNAMESE, RATHER THAN PATHET LAO. STUDY OF EVIDENCE MAY HOWEVER INFLUENCE HIM TO ALTER THIS APPROACH. IN ANY EVENT, WE BELIEVE KHAMHOU WILL CONDUCT AN ENERGETIC INVESTIGATION, RESULTS OF WHICH MAY IN TURN AFFECT PRIME MINISTER'S ATTITUDE. WE INTEND TO REMAIN DISCREETLY IN BACKGROUND WITH RESPECT TO KHAMHOU'S INVESTIGATION SO AS TO AVOID CREATING IMPRESSION THAT HE IS ACTING AS ANYTHING OTHER THAN PRIME MINISTER'S AGENT, BUT WILL REMAIN IN CLOSE TOUCH WITH THE GENERAL.

4. ON APRIL 22 BRITISH AMBASSADOR CALLED ON CHARGE AND AMONG OTHER SUBJECTS DISCUSSED DEAN/SHARMAN CASE. HE REFERRED TO LETTER HE HAD RECEIVED FROM AMBASSADOR WHITEHOUSE PROVIDING CHRONOLOGY OF CASE, AND ASKED WHAT HE COULD DO TO BE OF HELP. CHARGE TOLD HIM OF THE DISCOURAGING CONVERSATION AMBASSADOR HAD HAD WITH SOUPHANOUVONG (REF B), AND SAID THAT WHAT COULD BE HELPFUL WOULD BE FOR FRIENDLY AMBASSADORS TO KEEP IMPRESSING ON PL LEADERSHIP THAT THIS CASE WAS SOURING LAO RELATIONS WITH U.S. AND AUSTRALIA AND WOULD NOT FADE AWAY WITHOUT A CLEAR RESOLUTION. SPECIFICALLY CHARGE SUGGESTED THAT IT WAS IMPORTANT TO TRY TO GET AT THE HARD-CORE LEADERSHIP--SANAN, THE PL REP IN VIENTIANE, AND THOSE IN SAM NEUA. THE AMBASSADOR AGREED AND SAID HE WOULD MAKE NEW TRY TO VISIT SAM NEUA. (AUSTRALIAN AMBASSADOR BORTHWICK HAS ALSO BEEN TRYING TO GO THERE IN LAST FEW WEEKS, BUT SO FAR HAS RECEIVED NO RESPONSE.)
CHAPMAN

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